

Again the FCC, without consulting the public, will decide whether to further deregulate ownership of the media. This deregulation will allow the dissemination of information to be tightly controlled by a few individuals, as the biggest media giants buy up and monopolize smaller markets, drowning out the voices of less powerful, less influential media outlets.

The crux of the debate, really, is over the control of information. The supporters of deregulation want to put that control into fewer hands, into the hands of an unbelievably small minority. What happens when a single individual or close-knit junta controls an increasingly larger piece of the media pie?

The FCC's primary charter is to ensure that the media is diverse, competitive, and locally influenced. What have we seen since the Telecommunications Act of 1996? Clear Channel now owns over 1200 radio stations, most of which feature abrasive "news talk" hosts, all of whom promulgate highly conservative opinions and disparage any individuals who differ from their line of thought. Wouldn't a diverse market feature some liberal views? ClearChannel doesn't think so. The owners simply don't want opinions contrary to their own flitting about on their airwaves. It would be different if these programs really were "fair and balanced", if they featured co-hosts with polarity in their views and debated both sides of every contentious issue. But this is not the case. War protesters are labeled "hookers" and "drug addicts" and should "shut up or get out" of America. Music that is deemed "anti-American" is taken off play lists. Artists who criticize the actions of the current administration are blacklisted and banned from the Clear Channel airwaves. That doesn't sound like free speech. The "news talk" doesn't sound like free press. It sounds like propaganda. And propaganda is a tool, a tool for control, in this case a means of controlling dissent through intimidation and public opinion by directing which stories get reported and which ones don't.

During a previous senate commerce committee meeting regarding the media deregulation, Senator Sununu, an ardent supporter of relaxing media ownership caps, said in so many words that just because an individual owns hundreds of newspapers and media outlets, doesn't mean that they will be calling their editors to dictate what will or will not be reported on. Apparently Senator Sununu doesn't watch FOX news, where the opinions of its owner, Rupert Murdoch, are reiterated by 100% of his editorialists, which is all FOX "news" really employs. There are no journalists in that company. But maybe Sen. Sununu is right. Why not give control of the media to a handful of people? Maybe we'll get lucky and that small minority will actually put the interests of the public first, making localism, diversity, and competition top priority. But has that happened since 1996 Telecommunications Act, which removed many ownership limits? Is there more diversity of opinion? Is FOX news corp. a source of information that provides "fair and balanced" reporting, or does the no-spin approach make you dizzy?

Since we're in the giving mood, why not just hand over control of the US government to one individual and let him be dictator? If we pick ten people at random to become absolute dictators of our country,

some of them may turn out to be wise and benevolent leaders. But there is also a good chance that the power given to such an individual will be abused, which is why that isn't allowed to happen. The potential for abuse, the potential for disaster is too great. Why should control of our mass media be different? It shouldn't be of course, but the problem is that most people underestimate how much power would be put into the hands of those few individuals that end up owning the bulk of the media industry. Information is power. As gatekeepers, the new owners can control the flow of information to the masses, prevent people from hearing what they don't want heard. And the ownership won't be limited to just radio and television, but will include newspapers, magazines, movie studios, book publishers, internet, cable and satellite providers. Controversial books will no longer be burnt; they will simply never be printed. The most obvious example of what is to come is the complete absence of any news coverage relating to the upcoming FCC meeting, the lack of any sort of debate or discourse in the largest news media providers.

Joseph Goebbels, the minister of propaganda for the Nazi Party, was a huge proponent of tight centralization within the media. Aided with the perspicacious eye of an expert propagandist, he realized that control of the radio waves meant control of the masses:

“A government that has determined to bring a nation together so that it is once more a center of power in the scales of great world events has not only the right, but the duty, to subordinate all aspects of the nation to its goals, or at least ensure that they are supportive. That is also true for the radio. The more significant something is in influencing the will of the broad masses, the greater its responsibility to the future of the nation”

-Joseph Goebbels

What were the consequences of Goebbels' eventual monopoly of all Germany's media? Shall we ask the survivors of the death camps how the media monopoly contributed to diversity?

The current owners of course aren't Nazis, yet. But it doesn't matter. Deregulating the media opens the doors to fascism. It creates the potential for a small group with an agenda to take over the flow of information and influence public opinion. Monopolistic control of the media in Germany by the National Socialists eventually led to 50 million deaths. We live in a nuclear world now. History can repeat itself if people fail to learn from the lessons of the past. The consequences are simply too large to ignore. And they won't be ignored by the people who still believe that truth should trump profit and politics. One way or another the media monopolies and the dangers that accompany them will be overthrown. You can either heed the will of the people and make it happen peacefully, or continue to act as lapdogs to corporate american and experience first hand a violent overthrow of the corruption you are indulging.

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